/132 cont'd/

755 In the evening we went to watch the Hsiao people in Yen-sheng village perform Tso p'ing an, a ritual asking help of a god because of sickness. The name of the god was Fu Lao Ye. His image was [582] carved on wood and seated in a tiny wooden sedan. During the sacred service, two Taoist priests, who were accompanying the wooden god, performed different duties: one recited incantations, and the other performed a series of acts, representing the god's directions to the sick person. As I watched, I suspected that this kind of practice was undoubtedly introduced by the Chinese; a highly symbolic god could not possible have originated in such a primitive culture as the Hsiao's.

754 During a conversation late at night, Mr. Wang Chao-i described in detail the two ways of carrying out black magic that the Li people use, the chin mu and ta fu t'ou, which were really frightening and hair-raising even for us to listen to.

Second month, twenty-fourth day. (Wednesday)

621 At ten o'clock in the morning, accompanied by Chiang Ying-liang and Ho Yüan-chiung, we started fro Chih-pao village. We arrived at the place in about an hour. Most of the villagers were out fishing, and only three old men were left to watch the village gate. Headman Teng Te-ch'un, who seemed to be about 60 years old, was refined in appearance. We were told that there were about 30 families with about 300 members, averaging ten members in each family, and that he had two sons and eight grandsons. He probably 163 exaggerated somewhat, but it is undoubtedly true that the birth rate 171 among the Miao is higher than among the Li, and because of their more sanitary habits the death rate is also lower. We found in his 165 home numerous written records; most were such things as pictures of gods, almanacs, and the Taoist canons. Since we had no time 622 to copy them, we only borrowed one copy and brought it back with 217 us. Headman Teng killed chickens to treat us, and we could not resist his hospitality and stayed for the meal. The meal was cleaner and more eatable than one prepared by the Li would have been.

4:Mickey E-5 (1940-?) 1947 AE5 Miao AE5

women. One man of fifty-odd died from the kick of a cow, one of nearly seventy of heart trouble. Two old women of eighty-four and seventy-six died of old age. There were at least thirteen births in the period. This would have resulted in a slight increase in population had there not been families who moved to other villages. 165 163

Priests. The day that the wife of Cheng-hsiang was in labor for her second son, the old man who lived in the other part of their house and who was a head carpenter and a maker of bamboo articles such as scoops and baskets, set a bowl of rice grains with three lighted incense sticks in it on a bench and a bowl of wine on the floor in front of it. Then, holding a small chicken in his left hand, he chanted in Miao, cast lots with four pieces of bamboo, spilled out some of the wine, and then cast lots again. Finally he spilled all of the wine, took up the bowl of rice, and the bamboo pieces and went away. This was done in the room outside of the one in which she was confined, and the priest faced her door as he went through the ritual. 944 788 791

On that same day I saw the oldest and most proficient priest in the village squatting before a tripod of bamboo branches, behind and facing the corner of that house. Before him were a bowl of rice and one of wine. As he chanted he cast lots with pieces of bamboo. A boy from the house before which he was chanting brought him a piece of smoked pork in a loop of straw, a small bundle of straw, and a cleaver. He cut off a piece of the meat and put it on the burning straw, after which he spilled some of the wine on the ground. 788 793

Twice I saw this man with two younger men going solemnly from house to house. The first time the older man carried a bowl of rice, one of the others a gong, and the third a long staff of bamboo with colored paper streamers and leaves at the top, and a bag with rice in it. The man who carried the gong struck it as they went from one house to the next. At each house the older man entered and set his bowl of rice on a stool or bench, then, facing the door, chanted. The man with the staff and rice bag set the former down beside the door and both younger men went in. In each house they gave them a small measure of rice for the bag. The second time

[150 cont.]

101 White Meo ("Peu-Méo")
Black Meo ("Heu-Méo")
Red Meo ("Hong-Méo")
Meo of the flowers ("Hoa-Méo")
"Méo-moung-cha"

[151] These various tribes have characters, mores, and dialects only very slightly different. They are melting little by little [184] into one another and scarcely differ except in the details of feminine costume. Hence, we shall not study them separately, as we have done for the tribes of the preceding groups, and we shall restrict ourselves to pointing out in passing the peculiarities of each of them.

The "Méo" men are generally of medium or small stature, 142 robust, hardy, with strong legs, developed by the long climbs in the [147] mountains and the carrying of heavy burdens. Some "Méo" are of large stature, but these are not the toughest. The women are smaller than the men. Very sweet and graceful during their youth, they soon become very clumsy and heavy. Their breasts are extremely well [163] developed but deformed by their numerous progeny. The birth rate [165] is very high; the infant mortality, likewise.

The "Méo" have very coarse, very black hair. It is not rare [143] to find among them individuals who are blond or even albino, however.

273 The "Méo," very sober in normal times, seizes every opportunity to become drunk and to make good cheer. He often contracts [164] pulmonary diseases due to his heedlessness and to the bad conditions under which he lives.

147 It is impossible to acclimate him to low altitudes, where he immediately falls sick and rapidly becomes dispirited.

The "Méo" who have established irrigated rice fields have 24/ carried out this work along high mountain valleys. Yet they do not 36/ live near these planted areas, in spite of the relatively high altitude of the latter. As soon as the daily work is finished, they climb up again to their villages, which always remain located near the summits (see photo 428, Plate 43).

157 The "Méo" is of a gay disposition, very independent, courage- 609 ous, and extremely candid. Very hospitable, he always welcomes

163 Moreover, the birthrate among the Meo is one of the highest
165 of the high region and it is not rare to see six or seven children about each of their little houses. On the other hand, very high infant mortality operates to slow down the population's rate of increase. It is owing to the winter cold against which the Meo do not protect themselves by closing up their houses better and covering themselves more warmly. Be that as it may, we can foresee that in a more or less distant future, their tribes, no longer able to find nourishment in the mountains where they are settled, and driven along by new immigrations, will gradually come to overflow into the high valleys at less elevated altitudes, and will take the place of the Thai whose birthrate is very much lower.

Section 3

Dwellings

131 Sometimes Meo dwellings are found at the bottom of a cirque
342 situated on an elevated plateau, as at Dongvan, which is at a thousand
132 meters of altitude, but this is rather exceptional. In fact the Meo prefers to build his cabin on slopes with difficult approaches and near the summit of the mountains. The house usually is built on a small natural spur or platform cut into the side of the mountain, not far from a small ravine which provides him with water with the aid of a bamboo conduit. The roof is of straw or planks laid like tiles, the walls of pise or planks roughly joined, or yet of round logs placed one on the other, the doors wooden and fashioned with an axe. They almost never have windows. For light and air they rely on the interstices between the /133/planks or logs and on one of the gables whose upper triangle is open to every wind. In constucting his dwelling the Meo, who is still so industrious and thoughtful in his other tasks, shows himself to be most shortsighted. By building it with a little more care, and especially by stopping up both of its gables, he would keep away from his little family much of the bronchitis which comes each winter to threaten the lives of his loved ones. We have seen at 2,000 meters altitude and in zero temperature /centigrade/, little youngsters hugging the fire in a miserable wooden cabin with no other clothing than short cloth jackets. They stretched out their bare body and little hands to the flames, while shivering and coughing in a pitiful fashion, and the parents, accustomed to this spectacle, had no

/76 cont./

A 857 [231] Play with lizards and insects, such as beetles and butterflies, is seen much more rarely than among the Meau. In all such cases, however, the game ends with the merciless chopping up of the animal, although the children of the Akha have scarcely less manual dexterity than those of the Meau. A M [516] The Akha children evidently never hit upon the idea that one could talk with the animals, much less the idea that the animals could understand them.

6. In the Family

A M 596 [591] The organization of the family is exactly the same among the Akha and Meau. The unit is the large /extended/ family /Grossfamilie/. The sons marry early and with wife and children, live in the house of their father up to a certain time, as has already been discussed in detail (see the chapter, "Social Organization," section on "Family Units").

A M 595 Savina (1) attributes monogamy to the Meau. Undoubtedly, however,

1. II, p. 184.

however, polygamy is involved here; indeed, it is even more common among the Meau than among the Akha. Even though the poorer people live monogamously, this is the case among almost all polygamous peoples. The decisive point is simply the legally permitted form of marriage, and the fact that polygamy is permitted cannot be denied.

A M 183 842 163 M 595 596 For both peoples the ideal of life is to be blessed with as many children as possible. Thus the number of children living in each house is considerable. The Akha are even more prolific than the Meau. Among them almost every small /nuclear/ family /Kleinfamilie/ consisted of the parents and eight to twelve children. Naturally, the difference in age between the oldest and the youngest child in a house is very great. One Meau, for instance, /77/ who lived with two wives in one house, had eleven children, six of whom were already married and, with their wives and children, no longer lived

AKha A09
Miao AE5

/93 cont./

M 114 847 848 an attempt is made, with the help of medicines, to bring about an abortion. If this is unsuccessful, the child is abandoned after birth and dies of hunger." These statements, which Abadie (2) repeats verbatim, do not agree, as has been said.

with my findings.

M 827 582 [163] Among the Meau the average age of marriage for the young men is between sixteen and seventeen, that of the girls about four years later.

In explanation of this age difference, I was told that it is only after this age that a girl's body is strong enough to bear without harm the minimum of ten children expected of a woman. Earlier births are said to weaken the organism, and the women turn into invalids and are no longer able to do the proper amount of work. The /94/ young men, on the other hand, are able to beget strong children at a much earlier age.

M 595 [152] [554] As a consequence of this attitude the first wife of a Meau is generally older, more mature, and stronger than her husband. The younger, later wives can therefore be all the more easily absorbed into the household, especially since jealousy plays no role at all. The first wife is the chief wife, to whom all the other wives are subordinate in every respect. Accordingly, she has a position of trust within the community.

A 864 [513] [893] Among the Akha the father sleeps with the unmarried sons, the mother with the unmarried girls, each in one room of the dwelling. During the night the father visits the mother, or vice versa, "when everybody is asleep," as my informant put it. Thus, even in the parents' house there is no barrier to

A M [842] prevent the children from observing sexual activities from the earliest age. Like the Meau, the Akha, too, are well acquainted with the physiological aspect of paternity. Nevertheless

A 836 sexual freedom for unmarried persons prevails among them

/449 cont./

114 212 [175] mentions that Vicomte D'Ollone, on the basis of his voyages of exploration through unknown areas of China in the years 1906 to 1909, confirmed that the Meau not only had writing, but also written traditions. A writing peculiar to the Meau is also mentioned by another party (6), but these very general

6. Nan-chao, pp. 187 ff.

[173] remarks could not be verified. Other authors report that the Meau, according to their oral traditions, had had writing, to be sure, but had lost it. Such a tradition was not known to the Meau in Thailand visited by me. For the time being, I regard solely the statements of the older authors about the occasional use of Chinese characters as probable; the publications of D'Ollone were not available to me up to the time of publication of the present work.

/450/

Chapter 30

Statistical and Demographic Data and Differences between the Various Meau and Akha Tribes

161 175 648 The history of the Meau shows that they were driven out of their original homeland and in places were completely destroyed. To be sure, this destruction was primarily an ethnic and not a biological death. Thus, it is certain that the southern Chinese have absorbed a considerable amount of Meau blood. In this case, however, the Meau have disappeared as an ethnic unit, so that their descendants do not in any way differ culturally from the Chinese.

161 Wherever the Meau were not destroyed by violent measures on the part of their neighbors, however, they have increased greatly and quickly, although, to be sure, epidemics and famines occasionally interrupted this rapid increase in population. At any rate the large number of offspring (an [163] [842] average of seven children per family in my area of work) and

/450 cont./

161 the lack of any birth control, given the possibility for development in a suitable climate, have shown themselves to be incomparably stronger than the limiting factors.

[163] [842]

Precise statements concerning the total number of the Meau living today or concerning that of the tribes cannot be made because precise figures are lacking and the estimates available show extremely contradictory results. A distinction must be made here between the Meau faithful to their tribal customs and the groups which have been assimilated by their neighbors. Although the latter are probably incomparably greater in number than the former, they must remain outside of my consideration on account of the lack of any means of dealing with them.

162 131 [167] [648] The largest, densest Meau groups by far are even today still found in China, and, to be sure, not only in Yunnan, the province from which in particular the groups that immigrated to Thailand came, /451/ but above all in Kweichow, Kwangsi, and Honan. These Meau tribes seem to have maintained considerable independence in relation to the Chinese even today. Von Eickstedt, for instance, on page 1 b of his manuscript for the Buschan Festschrift of 1933, reports: "Even now the Miao form the largest and most representative bulk of the so-called southern barbarians of China, in Kweichow still at least half of the population, and actually the only one in the mountains. Indeed, no one knows how many millions are involved, for the Miao do not appreciate it at all if one is too closely concerned about their affairs."

If one compares these statements with the rest of the literature, he can only agree with him. For example, according to Warry (1), who is regarded as an authority by Scott, the

1. Page 598.

Meau make up almost half of the population of Kweichow and are also very widespread in Kwangsi and the neighboring provinces. Betts (2), Edkins (3), and Jaeger (4) make similar

2. Pages 1 ff.

AKha AO4
Miao AE5

/458 cont./

A M 161 Thus, in recapitulation, it can be said that the number of the Akha and Meau living today, as well as the actual demographic movement, lie completely in obscurity. The Akha, too, may represent a considerable contingent of population, but it can hardly be assumed that it is a matter of anywhere near as mighty a bulk of population as the Meau. From my own observations I can say that in the case of both tribes it is a matter of thoroughly healthy people. As a consequence A M [163] [165] of the average number of children, from eight to twelve among the Akha and seven among the Meau, a strong increase of the population is to be presumed, in spite of high infant mortality, wherever there are no limiting factors, such as sickness (see the chapter, "Medicine"), crop failure, warlike events, or special laws of the political rulers of the country, which, of course, decisively influence the natural increase. /Ills. 86-91 appear here on unnumbered pages./

/459/ Chapter 31

Talent, Knowledge, Character, Morality, and Manners

M 181 461 The Meau are a typical mountain people. They are by nature healthy, honest, sincere, not at all treacherous, and, above all, industrious. This is necessary in order to master the hard daily work that is to be done year in and year out. One M [124] seldom sees adults sit around idly. Among the Meau, whenever I summoned my informants for linguistic studies, they provided themselves beforehand with the necessary material for at least making string or rope during our conversations. They then worked mechanically while I conversed with them. These M 181 157 conversations and my observations of their daily life gave me a good opportunity to discover that the burden of everyday life had not made them morose. On the contrary, they are cheerful, merry, and, at the same time, very conscientious.